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**Thursday, November 14, 2013**

***Rep. George Miller (D-CA), senior Democrat on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Opening Statement on “The Effects of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act on Schools, Colleges, and Universities” for hearing on Wednesday November 14, 2013***

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I want to thank the witnesses for testifying today. The goal of the Affordable Care Act is to provide affordable and quality health coverage for millions of Americans, regardless if they lose their job, regardless if they have pre-existing medical conditions, and regardless if they can't afford coverage.

The ACA calls on everyone to do their part to make health care work better.

Individuals are required to take personal responsibility to purchase health coverage so taxpayers and other policyholders don't have to foot the bill if they get sick.

The federal government is doing its part by providing tax credits to those who can't afford to buy health coverage on their own.

Large employers –the overwhelming majority of whom are already responsibly providing health care coverage to their employees -- are being asked to include coverage to all full-time employees.

Hospitals and health care providers are doing their part by finding innovative and less costly ways to successfully treat patients.

And insurance companies – who are now finally prohibited from skimming off the best risks and discriminating against those who have pre-existing conditions—are stepping up and competing for customers on price and quality of service.

Opponents of the ACA continue to claim that employers across the country will shift full-time workers to part-time, just under 30 hours, because of the employer responsibility rules.

However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), since the ACA became law, 9 out of 10 jobs created have been full time.

BLS data also contradicts claims that employers are shifting employees just below the 30- hour threshold; there is no data to support that this is a widespread practice.

What is true is the ACA is helping improve labor markets by limiting the growth of health insurance premiums, reducing job lock, and providing small businesses with new tax credits for providing coverage.

If everyone does their part, we can transform and modernize the nation's health care system by tackling escalating health care costs, by improving patient access and outcomes across the country, and by boosting the long-term economic success and employment in the medical sector.

Local school districts and colleges and universities have a long and successful partnership with the federal government.

We see this partnership in higher education, to increase college access. Because of leadership by this Administration and Democrats in Congress, the maximum award for Pell grants has increased by \$905 since 2008, and the number of Pell Grant recipients has expanded by 50 percent over that same time, providing college access to millions of additional low-income and middle-class students across the country.

We see this partnership in K through 12 education. For elementary and secondary schools, Congress provided billions of dollars of extra help to improve school performance through Title I and IDEA through the Economic Recovery Act.

We see this partnership in early childhood. Just yesterday we introduced bipartisan legislation called the "Strong Start for America's Children Act," a landmark effort to improve and invest more in early childhood education.

Democrats are also working closely with school districts to oppose the draconian sequestration budget cuts that threaten the progress we're making to improve education quality.

And now we will see this partnership in health care. Schools and colleges are large employers. In rural areas, sometimes they are one of the only significant employers.

The ACA is another opportunity for education institutions – as employers – to partner with states and the federal government to ensure that their employees have health coverage that keeps them healthy and hard at work educating the nation's students.

I hope today's conversation will be a constructive one and we welcome suggestions on how we can make these requirements work fairly for both employers and employees in the education sector.